GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1569
ANSWERED ON:24.07.2002
COMMITTEE ON PIO
NARESH KUMAR PUGLIA

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high level Committee has been constituted to go into the problems being faced by the people of Indian origin abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the terms & reference of the Committee;

(d) whether the Committee has since submitted any report to the Government; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a) Yes, Sir

(b) A High Level Committee onthe Indian Diaspora was constituted in August,2000 under the chairmanship of Dr. L.M.Singhvi, MP. Other members of the Committee were Shri R.L.Bhatia, M.P. and former Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri J.R.Hiremath,Indian Foreign Service (Retd.) and Shri Baleshwar Agrawal, Secretary General, Antar-Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad,New Delhi and Shri J.C.Sharma, then Additional Secretary(NRI&PV) and currently Secretary(PCD), Ministry of External Affairs as it Member Secretary.

(c) The terms of reference of the Committee are attached.

(d) The Committee has submitted its Report to the Government in December,2001.

(e) The Committee has, inter-alia, recommended
(i) Celebration of 9th January every year as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas,
(ii) Institution of Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards and
(iii) Revision of the Persons of Indian Origin(PIO) Card Scheme. All these three recommendations have been accepted by the Governmet.

Among the Committee`s other main recommendations are: grant of dual citizenship to foreign citizens of Indian descent residing in certain countries, engaging Indian Diaspora in the fields of Culture, Economic Development, Education, Health, Media, Tourism, Science & Technology, Philanthropy etc. in order to enhance their connectivity with India. They have also recommended improvement of facilities at the airports and ways to address problems of overseas Indian Labour etc. These recommendations are presently under examination of the Government.

Terms of Reference of High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora

1. Review the status of Persons of Indian Origin(PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians(NRIs) in the context of constitutional provisions Laws and rules applicable to them both in India and the countries of their residence;

2. Study the characteristics, aspirations, attitudes, requirements, strengths and weaknesses of Indian Diaspora and their expectations from India;

3. Study the role that the PIOs and NRIs may play in the economic and social and technological development of India;

4. Examine the current regime that governs the travel and stay of PIOs in India, and recommend measures to resolve the problems faced by NRIs in these areas;

5. Recommend a broad but flexible policy framework and specific plans for forging a mutually beneficial relationship with the region or PIOs and NRIs, and for facilitating their interaction with India and their participation in India`s economic development.